NOVEMBER 1956

The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

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Invitation to Thanksgiving

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By GEORGE STOB

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Notes and Letters . . .

SIRS:

I have been a reader of *The Reformed Journal* for several years and would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the excellent articles which continue to appear from month to month. Credit is due not only to the writers for their clear analyses of current problems, but also to the editors for their fine management.

In particular I would like to commend you for the lucid articles this year which were centered around the Synod and its decisions. I read every one with great enjoyment and got a much better understanding of the issues involved.

I hope that in the future you will continue to produce as high calibre a magazine as you have in the past few years.

In order that I can continue to receive *The Reformed Journal* promptly, please enter a change of address for me.

Sincerely yours,
JACK E. NYENHUIS
Palo Alto, Calif.

SIRS:

Methinks ye have not need to be ashamed in that ye did publish so timely an exhortation from the pen of your humble servant's esteemed companion in labour, J. J. Lamberts. Howbeit, many will there be who will bring all manner of accusation against him, saying that he hath subjected himself to the spirit of this evil age, having forsaken the instruction of his fathers. Hearken ye not unto them. Perchance they would fain make us to return once more unto an age they wot not, the which was evil even as this present.

Sounds a little irreverent, doesn't it? Why? Simply because we are accustomed to associating that kind of language

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An Invitation

to

THANKSGIVING

WHEN THE ORIGINATORS of the first Thanksgiving Day gathered to thank God for the bounties of his providence, they invited the American Indians to join them. Neither the differences of nationality and race, nor the paganism of the Indians, deterred these Calvinistic Pilgrims from inviting the Indians to join with them in prayer and thanks to the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Apparently no Pilgrim Calvinist thought to ask whether a pagan could pray to God or was able to give him thanks. None apparently asked concerning the propriety of pagans joining Christians by invitation to bring thanks to the God from whom all blessings flow.

It is with understandable satisfaction that American Calvinists point to the oft forgotten fact that the founding fathers of this nation and the originators of Thanksgiving Day, were also committed to the Calvinistic Faith. Indeed, this might well be urged with greater frequency. But it might also be well to ask why the American churches today, and particularly the Calvinistic ones, do not follow the example set long ago on bleak New England shores. Would it not be well if the churches today urged their unchurched neighbors to join with them on Thanksgiving Day in giving thanks to the Father of all mercies? Such an explicit and urgent invitation is the more appropriate when we remember that Thanksgiving Day is not a Church but a National holiday. It is not the Church but the President of the United States that issues the Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, calling upon the American people gratefully to acknowledge that the blessings we receive as a nation are received from Almighty God. For this the churches are thankful. But in what better way could they show their thankfulness than by re-echoing the voice of their Government, calling their fellow Americans to join them in giving thanks to God in this national Day of Thanksgiving?

Such an invitation of the churches to the unchurched would be expressive of the very spirit of the Day. Indeed, it would also be expressive of the very genius of the Day, for the extension of such an invitation would be to follow the example of the first celebrants of this Day. And, what is even more to the point, the churches would be following the Biblical example, for the ancient Psalmist, expressing the Biblical faith, raised his voice and cried: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands . . . Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise."

Why should the churches invite the unchurched to unite with them in giving thanks to God on Thanksgiving Day? They should do so for the same reason that the prophetic voice in Israel addressed all nations that on earth do dwell to "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise." All peoples are invited because "Jehovah, he is God: It is he that hath made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." The Psalmist declares that all people that dwell on the earth are God's creatures and as such belong to God; they are "his people" and "the sheep of his pasture." All people owe their existence and their lives to the God of Israel who created them; all people are his sheep, living from the pastures supplied by God's goodness. And because Jehovah is good, and has shown them his goodness by creating them and sustaining them, all men ought to enter with thanksgiving into his courts, the courts of him whose "lovingkindness endureth forever."

Let the churches today invite their unchurched contemporaries, as the Pilgrims invited the Indians, and as Israel invited the Gentiles, to join them in giving thanks to God, to the God who is good, to the God whose lovingkindness endureth forever. Let the churches in this season of national Thanksgiving remind the thankless that it is God who hath made them, and that therefore they are his, his sheep who eat from his pasture. What wonderful opportunity is given the American churches by God through their Government! What a wasted opportunity if these churches fail to catch the spirit of the Psalmist, the spirit of Thanksgiving Day, the spirit echoed by the early Calvinistic Pilgrims and by the Presidential Proclamation, the spirit which extends to all men an invitation to thanksgiving.

Let the Church sing her Doxology within her walls. But let her also raise the old *One Hundredth* that all men may hear, remembering that this psalm of doxology is addressed only indirectly to God, but directly to "all peoples that on earth do dwell."

J. D.

Critical Issues in the Labor Problem

by George Stob

THE RESOLUTIONS ON LABOR adopted by the 1956 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church constitute the strongest position ever adopted by this church on these matters. They all but outlaw membership in the CIO or AFL, and make it quite clear that the only officially approved morality on this score is membership in the CLA. They are resolutions which predetermine the workingman's conscience and settle his moral problems *ex cathedra*. This is what some people have thought proper and necessary, and there is on their part a large measure of gratification for these new Synodical declarations.

This turn of events can be attributed in very large measure to the influence of the Canadian churches. The Canadian Classes have for the past several years been persistent in overturing Synod to condemn membership in "neutral" unions and to exhort to the establishment of and membership in Christian labor associations. Canadian ministers and laymen have been writing vigorously in *De Wachter* and the *Calvinist-Contact*, expressing their impatience with what they consider the equivocating and compromising position of Christian Reformed "leaders" in America. Now it can be said, and has been said in *De Wachter*, that the Synodical resolutions of 1956 ought to go a long way toward satisfying the Canadian people and quieting their complaints. No doubt they do. The Canadian delegates at Synod expressed themselves as very well satisfied with these resolutions, and heartily recommended their adoption.

I am persuaded, however, that the adoption of these resolutions provides no real cause for gratification. They impose unduly on the conscience of the Christian workingman, and do not help him in the existential problem of Christian living which he faces daily. What is more, these resolutions, the theological judgments out of which they grow, and the climate in which they have been cultivated, tend to confuse and complicate matters, and make much more difficult a fruitful address on the part of our church to the labor question and related social problems. We are — and not a little because of the thinking and spirit of the Canadian people — in a somewhat critical situation. This will become apparent from an examination of several critical issues that have arisen in connection with the labor question.

Is Discussion Possible?

In connection with the question of labor unio membership it has become necessary to ask whethe discussion is possible. The Canadian churches hav certainly not asked or waited for discussion. The have asked only for action. They have made ove tures for ecclesiastical declarations condemnin "neutral" union membership, so that "great su port and very needed help" might be given to th Christian labor movement in Canada. They hav wanted decision, not conversation.

The question of labor union membership is settled matter for our Canadian brethren, most whom have only recently come from the eccles astical and social situation obtaining in the Net erlands. They are persuaded that, whether in th Netherlands or in the United States and Canad the Christian workman ought not to be in any bu a Christian labor association.

There is no question about their sincerity in s believing, nor about their right to give expressio to what they believe. It is good that they hav strong convictions, and that they speak for the without compromise. We should not want anybod to sell his soul to either a minority or majorit judgment with which he disagrees.

We might, however, ask our Canadian brethre to recognize that people in America may be just a sincere while holding a contrary opinion. We migh also ask that they listen to what American Calvi ists have to say about the question of labor unio membership, and give it some careful thought, i hopes they might learn something from American even as we might learn something from them. Thi might help the Hollanders in Canada to becom better integrated into the life and thought of th Christian Reformed community, and it might hel us all to cultivate the kind of fellowship that ough to prevail among those who are one communion.

Many things written in Canada, however, sug gest that the Canadians think many people in Ame ica are not only wrong but weak, not only mistake but unfaithful. It often appears that our Canadia brethren are not sure that the thinking of som Americans is respectably Calvinistic; and the seem quite distrustful of American leadershi They have come to America with a sense of crusad They seem to have come not so much to follow walk along as to lead; not so much to learn as t

teach. These are things which prompt the question: Is discussion possible?

The difficulty will become evident if we take note of what Canadian people have written and how they react to the writings of others. Rev. H. Van Andel, minister at New Westminster, B. C., Canada, is one of the most articulate and forthright in expressing his distrust of American leaders. He has written a very frank article in *De Wachter,* giving his opinions about Canada-USA relations. In this article he takes occasion to say: "When we think of the position that leading figures in American ecclesiastical life take with respect to neutral Unions, then we say frankly that we Canadians don't want any enlightenment from them about this matter" (June 26, 1956, p. 414). That is plain and blunt. But it is honest. And it suggests that since there are no minds to be informed, there is little left to do but to count the votes — including the increasingly large blocs of Canadian votes — at Synod.

Quite a bit more disconcerting is the severe judgment under which Rev. Van Andel places a fellow-minister for his proposal that Christians organize to increase the effectiveness of their witness within the existing unions. Some time ago Rev. Lambertus Van Laar proposed consideration of an American Christian Labor Institute as an "instrument to witness for Christ *within* existing unions." This drew from Rev. Van Andel the following formidable rebuke: "There are moments in life when you have to lay the cards on the table against brothers who walk the way of error. This A.C.L.I. is treason within the walls of the Kingdom of God. . . . I pray: Lord, destroy the A.C.L.I. and build up the C.L.A." (*Calvinist-Contact,* June 22, 1956, p. 2).

Rev. Van Halsema, editor of *De Wachter,* took note of Rev. Van Laar's proposal, and also of the 25th Anniversary of the C.L.A. in America. He suggested that this was a good occasion to consider which of the two methods of Christian witness we ought to follow, and called for discussion of the question (*De Wachter,* May 1, 1956). This stirred up a storm of protests from Canada. Rev. John Vander Meer, of Barrie, Ont., Canada, took note of Rev. Van Laar's proposal, and the "somewhat favorable reaction" of Rev. Van Halsema, and said: "I am distressed" (*"Ik ben er beroerd van"*), and seemed to wonder whether he could continue to regard his two colleagues with esteem (*Ibid.,* May 29, 1956, p. 349). A Canadian layman thought Rev. Van Halsema's question about the two ways was an instance of sinful doubt and unbelief, reminiscent of the ten spies (*Ibid.*). Others thought the question and the invitation to discussion gave evidence of vacillation and uncertainty concerning the clear witness of the Bible (*Ibid.,* July 10, 1956, p. 445). There was only one Canadian voice venturing to say a word in favor of Rev. Van Laar's proposal, but he thought it best to remain anonymous (*Ibid.*).

In another instance, Rev. John Gritter, reporting a discussion of the labor problem at a minister's conference in Canada, observed that all were agreed that Christ was King also in the sphere of labor, even though there were differences concerning the method of witness. To Mr. P. Speelman, President of the Association for Reformed Scientific Studies, this seemed an instance of a compromising "Yes *and* No," and he expressed the hope that there would be leaders "who lead the members of the church and point out to them the right ways, leaders who still know the Yes *or* No" (*Calvinist-Contact,* May 25, 1956, p. 7; June 1, 1956, p. 8). In the same connection Mr. Speelman expressed his dismay at certain "leaders" in the Calvinist church, who are associated with the Calvinist journal, *Philosophia Reformata,* but whose writings are a mockery of the Calvinistic Philosophy, and then declares: "The Canadian Calvinists will have to keep the watch on the walls of Zion, in order to preserve the heritage of the fathers and not sell it for a mess of pottage" (*Ibid.,* June 1, 1956, p. 8).

Are these Canadian brethren right? Is it true that the CLA is so obviously and unquestionably the only right position that it is sinful to raise the question? Is it true that those who do not espouse the CLA as yet need only one thing — a willingness to bow before the clear teaching of the Word of God? Is discussion possible, or even permissible? Or is it time only for decision?

Is It A Question of Loyalty?

There are some — indeed, there are many — who are not members of the CLA, but of the CIO or AFL. And there are others who hold that there is no good reason for discouraging or forbidding membership in such labor unions. Is their loyalty to Jesus Christ therefore to be held in question? Is it to be concluded that these people are indifferent, uncommitted, less consecrated Christians? Is the question of membership in the CIO or AFL on the one hand or the CLA on the other hand a question of loyalty?

Much of the propaganda for the Christian labor associations does, indeed, make labor union membership a question of basic loyalty. This is due in large part to the judgments that are held concerning the character of the labor unions. Many would see in the difference between CIO-AFL and CLA a specific and concrete outline of the antithesis, and judge that one who is a member of CIO or AFL is on the wrong side of the antithesis.

Mr. Joseph Gritter, the Secretary of the CLA in America, argues for membership in the CLA be-

Labor Problem — Continued

cause "the Christian worker who believes in dedication of his life to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot give expression to the principles of life to which he is committed through an organization that refuses to be bound by the principles of justice and love taught by his Lord in the Holy Scripture" (*Christian Labor Herald,* May 1953, p. 2). Mr. Gritter repeatedly stresses the fact that so-called neutral organizations "refuse to be bound by the Word of God," on which account he considers these organizations unacceptable to those who want to live by the Word of God.

There are others who put it a bit more strongly. Our Canadian brethren, especially, insist that membership in CIO-AFL or CLA is not a matter of method, but of principle, because "the whole labor question has always rested on the teaching of the antithesis, *either* Christ *or* Satan" (*De Wachter,* July 10, 1956, p. 445). Rev. John Vander Meer holds that a Christian may not be a member of a "neutral" union because it is "a union that completely and altogether negates Christ," because a Christian cannot "say Yes to the command of his Christ, and at the same time say Yes to an organization that dishonors Christ," and because a Christian cannot "at one and the same time, in one and the same place, satisfy two masters who stand diametrically over against each other" (*Ibid.,* May 29, 1956, p. 349). Rev. H. Van Andel rather baldly characterizes the "neutral" unions as institutions of "the kingdom of darkness." Membership in them is quite unthinkable for the Christian, because "he can never say: I belong to the Kingdom of God, but I subscribe in a certain situation to the laws of the Kingdom of darkness." Van Andel declares that we cannot be members of the "neutral" unions, "without doing violence to the laws of God's Kingdom, without being required to accommodate ourselves to unScriptural rules." The Christian, therefore, must "concentrate in separation organization." "Over against the concentrated organizations of the devil we may not put lone individuals, but we must form a well-organized group" (*Calvinist-Contact,* June 29, 1956, p. 1).

This characterization of the difference between "neutral" and Christian labor organizations quite naturally leads to serious questionings concerning the loyalty of those who do not declare unequivocally for the Christian labor associations; and it is a bit unfortunate that almost every page of argument and propaganda for the CLA registers indictment against the loyalty of those not associated with it or its cause.

Mr. Joseph Gritter places some very severe stric tures against people who do not associate with th CLA and against the churches which do not ad quately support the CLA. Membership in CIO an AFL is condoned, says Gritter, "simply because c the 'bread and butter' question." Because "neutral unions have the evil power to deprive men of th means of making a living, "consistories have nc the courage to demand separation from such union . . . It is our refusal to pay the high cost of loyalt to Christ, individually and as a Church, that ha brought us to the present sad state of affairs" (*Th Reformed Journal,* Aug. 1952, p. 16). In anothe place Gritter says: "Thousands of Christian work ingmen have not been willing to make the sacrific And the blame for that belongs especially to th church, which has not had the courage to take a de cisive and positive standpoint and to support it (*De Wachter,* June 19, 1956, p. 398). Mr. Gritte notes an increasing tendency to affiliate with "sc called neutral organizations that engage in unchris tian practices," because it is "more increasingl difficult to be active in a profession or in a busines without some unchristian affiliation." This, say Mr. Gritter, in a sweeping and severely censoriou judgment, "explains also why during the last sev eral years men in the professions and business hav come out more and more in defense of membershi of Christian workers in so-called neutral union *They must do that to justify their own unchristia alliances"* (*Christian Labor Herald,* Aug. 1953, pp 2, 3; italics added).

The question of loyalty is made central in th several overtures on labor that have come from th Canadian Classes, all of which take the positio that if one is a faithful Christian who confesses th kingship of Christ he must avoid the so-called neu tral labor unions and affiliate with the Christia labor association (cf. *Acts* 1956, pp. 545, 547, 548) But it is the Rev. H. Van Andel who most of a lays his Christian brethren under the charge o unfaithfulness. In answer to the proposal to wit ness within existing unions through an America Christian Labor Institute, Rev. Van Andel says "That such a thing should be proposed by Calvinists is distressing to me. Because that witnessing i nothing more than a happily found pretext (mask er) which must disguise the sin of membership . . . What a compromising and equivocating thin — that agitation for the A.C.L.I. . . . This A.C.L.I is treason within the walls of the Kingdom of God (*Calvinist-Contact,* June 22, 1956, pp. 1, 2). Mr Peter Speelman speaks in much the same way "We are so afraid that behind all this talk and the ologizing there is nothing other than the search fo escape from difficult situations, the attempt to cove

up spiritual poverty; an unwillingness to fight; no trust anymore in the Lord of Lords, in Jesus Christ, whom men confess to be king of all spheres of life; fear for the consequences; too much calculation" (*Ibid.*, June 1, 1956, p. 3).

Is it so? Is the question one of Christian faithfulness and loyalty? Are the lines between CIO-AFL and CLA so clearly drawn that it need only to be said as did Elijah: "How long go ye limping between the two sides? If the Lord be God follow him; but if Baal, then follow him"? Is the difference in labor organizations part of the antithesis: God vs. Baal, or Christ vs. Belial? Is the situation such that we need only straightforward exhortation and discipline?

What Is the Christian Social Objective?

There is another question — one that relates more to the substance of the issue. It is the question as to how the Christian social objective is to be defined. This question of social objective will have a good deal of bearing on judgments concerning the kind of social organization that is needed not only with respect to labor but with respect to every other kind of human endeavor.

I have a strong feeling that much of the conviction about the high urgency for Christian organizations is based upon a high confidence concerning what Christian organizations can and must accomplish. In this connection it seems that many Calvinists are speaking the very strange and misplaced language of a 19th century liberal optimism.

In an earlier issue of the *Journal* (Sept. 1953), I called into question the social objectives being proposed by the CLA. The CLA was speaking of "pioneering toward a Christian society," and of instructing workingmen so that they might have the intelligence needed "for the building of a Christian social order." In the *Christian Labor Herald,* Mr. Joseph Gritter wrote: "Western civilization is not going to be saved by plugging a hole here and there, by placing a Christian teacher here and there in so-called neutral institutions, or through Christian workers here and there joining mighty unchristian organizations. There is only one way in which it can be saved. That is: by subjecting it to the will of God. That subjecting may be accomplished by exerting positive, strong, and clear influence through organized efforts within society, but outside of established, organized, so-called neutral institutions. . . . We claim that the only hope of reconquering the world for God, or subjecting it to His will, lies in the way of organized efforts of Christian people, acting unitedly on the basis of the Word of God" (June 1952, p. 2).

All the writings which plead the necessity of Christian labor associations still make the coming and establishment of the Kingdom of God the goal of Christian social effort, and place a tremendous amount of confidence in the accomplishments of organization, the united efforts of Christians, and the concentrated power of the many. A Canadian layman writing in *De Wachter* or July 10, 1956, urges effort and prayer for the CLA "so that the kingship of Christ may be acknowledged in every little part of the world where people live and work. . . . That is the purpose and striving of the CLA." The same writer observes that the field of labor "must be wrested away from Satan with all power and effort, and be made ready (with prayer for the working of the Holy Spirit) so that Christ may get ground under His feet also in the factory." Mr. P. Speelman declares: "The task of a Christian labor organization is not that of evangelizing in the narrow sense often given to it, but it is an organization which desires to transform society in a Christian-social way, and that is not the task of the individual" (*Calvinist-Contact,* May 25, 1956, p. 7).

Rev. H. Van Andel urgently desires to join "with all Calvinists in North America in a crusade for the recovery of lost territory" (*Ibid.*, July 6, 1956, p. 5). For this he considers organization and concentration in organization necessary. The A.C.L.I. is treason to the Kingdom of God. "What we need, over against that, is an organization which as one man comes forward in the life of the people for freedom of conscience and for labor relations based on the Scripture. The larger the organization, the more powerful her voice. The more solid the basis of it, the stronger her steadfastness. Why organization? There is much to be said on this score, but I mention only one thing. The Kingdom of God *is* 'organization.' That is already implied in the word 'kingdom.' There is also a kingdom of Satan. Now Satan knows very well (*drommels goed*) that his 'kingdom' needs organization. The kingdom of God is not an individual in enemy territory. To be sure, it could be such on occasion. But the kingdom of God is an organized group of citizens, who raise the banner of their king and who claim the various spheres of life for Him. That is why I pray: Lord, destroy the A.C.L.I. and build up the C.L.A." (*Ibid.*, June 22, 1956, p. 2). Rev. Van Andel has great confidence in concentrated effort and organization. "The adversary concentrates also. If there is one in this world who knows the power of concentration, it is the devil. The devil has learned that from God. God organized his chosen people Israel, strongly concentrated! Christ did the same with his church. Over against the concentrated organizations of the devil we must not set individuals, but we must form a cohesive

Labor Problem — Continued

(*saamverbonden*) group" (*Ibid.*, June 29, 1956, p. 1).

Is this really a right and proper statement of the Christian social objective? Are we permitting slogans about "winning the world for Christ," and "making every sphere subject to the Sovereignty of God," to play havoc with our thinking? If I am altogether mistaken and give a quite wrong slant to all these statements of Christian social objective, I beg for clear answer to the question: What is the social goal toward which Christian laboring men ought to work? I beg, too, for answer to the question: How does membership in a Christian labor association make it possible for a Christian to work toward a proper Christian social goal?

There is not only the questionable character of this definition of the Christian social objective. There is also something very strange-sounding about the definition of the individual Christian's task. When the proponents of separate labor organization write about the task to which the member of the CIO or AFL is appointed, they give him a task which is more than Herculean. Mr. Joseph Gritter, explaining the CLA's policy with reference to "Christian Workers' Groups" in neutral unions, declares that it is the duty of these Christian workers to get the labor unions "to bow before the authority of the Word of God." If they fail in that, they must withdraw and give their full support to the CLA (*De Wachter*, June 19, 1956, p. 399). Mr. P. Speelman defines the Christian task in the same manner, but has little confidence that any Christian workingman can fulfill it. "Do you believe that those individuals, who must infiltrate the neutral unions at the behest of the ministers, will get the foundations changed — and that is what must happen first of all" (*Calvinist-Contact*, June 1, 1956, p. 3).

This kind of speech about the Christian's duty in the world is marvelous to hear. It is for one thing fantastic. This is requiring of an ordinary, uneducated laboring man under the most difficult of circumstances what no one requires of a minister of the Word under the most favorable of circumstances. Even though the minister preaches to a congregation of saints, God doesn't expect him to get them to bow before the authority of the Word or to change the foundation of their lives. The minister is to preach the Word, knowing that God will give the increase. It would appear that in any part of secular society — whether labor union, political party, community associations, or what have you — God would even less require of any individual that he transform the character of that group or organization into a God-confessing ar God-obeying unit. What more can one honest and truthfully require of a Christian than that I "live godly in this present world," and live ar speak his witness in it? To hold him to accomplis ments which belong only to God is fantastic.

Furthermore, this definition of the Christian task in a social organization is defeatist. It is n at all a challenge to reasonable or required pe formance of duty. It is rather a call or challeng to withdrawal, on the principle that if one cann within his life-time succeed in transforming h organization into a Christian one he must quit i Mr. Speelman knows that the A.C.L.I. won't wor no matter how much some ministers may want i because those little individuals can't get the found tions changed. And Mr. Gritter expects the CL "Christian Workers' Groups" in neutral unions dissolve eventually, because they won't get th unions to bow before the authority of the Word God. He is confident that in the end all Christia laboring men ought to find themselves in the CL because of failure to achieve a Christian CIO AFL (*De Wachter*, June 19, p. 399).

Is this a reasonable or right definition of th Christian's task as a member of the labor union On the assumption that it is, what does the Chri tian worker accomplish toward the goal by with drawing from his union and becoming a membe of a separate Christian labor association? Do he accomplish anything more than easing the diff cult burden of living godly in the present wor and exercising comfortable Christian fellowshi with Christian fellow-workers in a separated o ganization? If the individual in the union cann achieve what may be considered the right soci goal, how will many individuals joined togethe in a concentrated Christian organization achie it? It will be important for all of us to know wha the answer may be to this before we can acce the CLA or like Christian social organizations a the way out for the performance of the Christian social task.

* * *

These, I venture to suggest, are all crucial que tions, and must be faced quite honestly if we hop to come to any satisfactory resolution of our labo problems. There are other questions just as cr cial. I think at this moment of at least two. On is the question as to what we are to think of a American Christian Labor Institute as "an instr ment to witness for Christ *within* existing unions. The other is the question as to whether membe ship in either one organization or another is pro erly a matter on which the church ought to mak pronouncements. I will venture an address t these questions in a later article.

Toward a Theistic Creationism (II)

by Leonard Verduin

In this article on Theistic Creationism Rev. Verduin concludes the discussion he initiated in the October issue of the *Journal*. In the earlier article Rev. Verduin pointed out (1) that in biblical usage "to create" is not only to make something out of "nothing" (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3), but also to make something out of "already existing materials" (Gen. 2:7, 11ff); (2) that creation out of nothing was "immediate" creation whereas creation out of already existing materials was "mediate" creation; (3) that although immediate creation out of nothing was "with time" rather than in time, mediate creation out of already existing materials was very definitely "in time"; (4) that mediate creation, accordingly, was "processional" as well as "irruptive" or "ictic," involving a "process" as well as an "incursion," and exhibiting a horizontal dimension of immanence as well as a vertical dimension of transcendence; (5) that, indeed, throughout the Bible the "irruptive" and the "processive," the transcendent and the immanent, stand in the closest possible relation to each other, forming "the warp and woof of a single fabric." It is against the background of these definitions and distinctions that Rev. Verduin now carries forward and concludes the discussion.

—The Editors

It is really quite enlightening, as we have already said in a note, to see how the Bible brings in the dimension of process at the very moment the Good Book is setting forth the irruptive dimension. A few further examples? When Jehovah God brings His chosen people across the Red Sea without benefit of bridge or ferry He performs a miracle — if that is the right name for an act of God in which the irruptional dimension is in the foreground. But the inspired writer of Exodus proceeds at once to make plain that this irruptive act of God did not cancel out the processional dimension; for we are told that God made the dry sirocco from the Arabian desert to blow all the previous night. What is this if not a studied attempt to make theists of us, that is, to make us see that the integration of Creator and creature is one in which the irruptional does not cancel out the processional.[1]

So too with the miracles of Jesus. In them the ictic or irruptive dimension is plainly in the foreground. But that does not mean that they were built on a deistic last. It does not mean that they were examples of sheer transcendence. In them there is likewise a concession to the processional dimension. When the wine is in short supply at Cana in Galilee then He of whom it is said that in the primeval moment "all things were made by Him" invokes the supernatural in order to relieve the embarrassment. And what does He do? Snap His fingers in *ex nihilo* fashion and command the butlers to pour? No, this is no time for pure irruption, no time for naked transcendence. And so with a kindly nod at process He bids men fill the vessels, fill them with water, the element that plays such an important role in the production of wine whenever and wherever. The deistically slanted mind, the man that thinks that religion feeds solely upon the ictic, would have preferred a nakedly irruptive flip of the wrist, and, presto! But the genuine theist will see here again a special precaution on the part of the Scriptures, taken to keep us from doing violence to the theistic formula.

Or take the miracle of the feeding. Hungry crowds all about Him, with nary a bread truck in sight. He who is sensitive to men's needs, also their bodily needs, decides to make provision for these needs. Does He of whom it is said that "without Him was nothing made that hath been made" resort to pure transcendence? Surely He of whom it is said that "He calls the things that are not so that they become" could have resorted to *ex nihilo* techniques! Why not a sovereign "Let there be bread . . ."? But He does not want the irruptive dimension of this "mighty act" to eclipse the processional. That would be a denial of the theistic cause about which the Bible is so much concerned. And so a hasty inventory is taken to determine what and how much of creaturedom there is on hand, the creaturedom to which hungry men are wont to turn. A lad with a few barley buns and a dried fish or two. Taking these in a concession to process He expends upon them the kind of power only the Creator wields — and all are fed and then some. Could the inspired record contain a more manifest rebuke for the deist who as he dotes on the ictic searches high and low for pure irruption? To prefer the story without the concession to the non-irruptional is to betray an ethnic trait in one's soul, a vestige of one's pre-Christian past, or an atavistic return to a pagan construction which the Bible is at pains to obviate.

We spend considerable time on this matter because we wish to show that in a genuinely theistic creationism there likewise will not be this frantic chase after the irruptional. In a truly theistic

1. When in Christian Reformed circles a generation ago men found fault with a professor of theology for dwelling on the phenomenon of the all night wind that preceded the crossing, so high-lighting the fact that this miracle had its processional dimension, they gave evidence of a deistic bias.

Theistic Creationism — Continued

creationism place will be given ungrudgingly to the processional dimension.

It must be observed that wherever the dimension of process is in evidence, there recourse to inherent potentiality is present. A glance back at the miracles of the Bible which we have just discussed will convince the reader. In the miracles there is, quite commonly, at least a token concession to inherent potentiality. This throws a significant light upon the Biblical position that the miracles were actually obstructed whenever this potential was inadequate. We read that "He could not do many mighty acts among them because of their unbelief." He whose conception of the miracle is that of an act of sheer irruption, done in disregard for inherent potentiality, will have great difficulty at this point, a difficulty born of sheer deism, a difficulty that does not give the theist any insuperable trouble.

This idea of recourse to inherent potential, which in itself is but an implication of the processional dimension, is well-nigh omnipresent in authentic Christianity.

We meet it, for example, in the doctrine *de Sacra Scriptura*. The Bible is God's work and as such it has a genuinely irruptive dimension. But it just as surely has the processional dimension — which means that it did not come into being without recourse to potential inherent in the persons chosen for the writing. In His self-disclosure in the Bible God made unstinted use of the potential inherent in Isaiah and Paul and the rest. Deistically slanted people, that is, people who are embarrassed by the dimension of process in this locus, would have preferred a Bible in which the human fingerprints were deniable, in which the processional dimension could be negated. But this embarrassment is a deistic hangover; the preference for a Bible done on a purely irruptional line is a decidedly ethnic trait. Persons suffering from this ethnic bias would be happier with a purely irruptive revelation — such as the Ephesians thought to have in the image of Diana that reportedly had come hurtling out of heaven one fine day, wholly apart from creaturely potential and quite unrelated to historic process!

The Bible is not ashamed of this recourse to creature and to creatural potential. The authentic delineation of the Christ of God is that of an irruption (Jesus Christ may indeed be called the "Great Irruption"); but the incarnation was not achieved without recourse to creature and creaturely potential. This is the deeper meaning of the creedal item "born of the Virgin Mary." Men of ethnic habits have tried the formula of pure irruption here; the first heresy the Christia Church had to face and lay low was an attemp to deny the genuine recourse to creaturehood im plied in the authentic Christology. Docetism whether early or late, denied that Jesus Chris was actually come in the flesh because it wa embarrassed, pagan that it was, by the idea tha Jesus Christ actually stood in the historic process Too much can of course be said of Mary th mother of Jesus and Mariolatry is a great evil but one can also have too little to say abou Mary. He does this when he makes the Chris so exclusively irruptional as to betray a seriou defection from true-blue theism.

All the items in the Christian creed ar construed on a theistic last. None must be viewe in the light of sheer transcendence, none in th light of pure immanence. None is construed o the purely irruptive line, none on the nakedly pro cessional. All the deeds of God toward and wit the children of men are done not with lofty dis dain for the potential He has caused to resid there. Take also the theological item of regenera tion. Theologians who have a predilection for th ictic have insisted that regeneration is immediat that is, that it has nothing to do with proces and the processional. Happily, Reformed theolog has refused to go wholly in this direction. Whil granting that regeneration has a genuinely irrup tive dimension and that in it we encounter divine activity the end result of which is a huma being who is like the wind of which we kno neither the whence nor the whither, yet authenti Reformed thought has just as certainly kept it eye open for the processional dimension in whic exploitation of potential inherent in creaturalit was not ruled out. This shows a fine theisti intuition on the part of Reformed thinkers.[2]

The same theism has, happily, kept men of th Reformed tradition, when they discussed the ques tion of the origin of the human soul, from decla ing either for Creationism or Traducianism. The who have a penchant for the irruptive dimensio will be inclined to lean toward Creationism an

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2. Reformed theology has had an eye for the similari that exists between creation and regeneration. Reforme theologians wrote that "This aforementioned regeneratio this new creation, this resurrection from the dead, th making-alive" is a matter which "in respect to potency not inferior to or less than is creation. . ." (Canons Dordt, III & IV, 12). They drew the comparison the mo confidently because the preferred word in the New Testame for regeneration is *paliggenesia*, a word meaning literal "re-creation." But the comparison is apt only if by cre tion we mean mediate creation. Regeneration is not a *ex nihilo* operation; it is done with recourse to already e isting creaturality; in it inherent potentialities are explo ed, for it is a man and not a lower creature that is r created.

they who are inclined to stress the processional dimension will favor Traducianism. But in the interest of consistent theism it is best to refuse to make this a matter of either-or. It is best to say that at this point, too, we must keep the track clear for both the irruptive and the processional. Doubtlessly there is here also something like exploitation of inherent potential.

The same general situation confronts us in regard to the doctrine of the Covenant. Reformed thinkers have very soon picked up the line of the transcendence; but they have traditionally been quite as sensitive to the processional dimension. Here too the processional dimension must be recognized. Recourse to inherent potential quite as surely. When men in the one-sided theology of Rev. Herman Hoeksema begin to speak of the Covenant as being condition-less, then they give evidence of a deistic tendency that must be known for what it is, and rebuked.

So one could go on. Everywhere the Bible tells the same story. We have a Kingdom of God that, like the New Jerusalem, descends from God out of heaven — but it is as it were extracted out of the historic process quite as surely. Everywhere there is ready exploitation of process. Everywhere there is unhesitating exploitation of inherent potential. It is highly doubtful whether there is a single juncture in the Christian system where we encounter a mere poking-at-things-from-the-outside, if we may borrow an expression which the immanentists have coined in their desire to make the idea of the irruptive seem ridiculous.

Even the doctrine of God's sovereignty can be given a pagan thrust; this stupendous theological item can be, and sometimes is, twisted quite out of shape. If in our view of the decrees God's sovereignty is thought to impinge upon man in precisely the same way in which it impinges upon a creature of lesser inherent potential — then we are already in serious error. Our Reformed fathers were not trifling when they insisted as they discussed the matter of the decrees that "God does not deal with men as with sticks and with stones." We do well to keep this fact in mind all the while as we deal with the momentous question of the decrees; he who brings it in as an afterthought, just as he is closing the book, has probably until that moment been close, too close, to the ethnic version of the decrees, the version that one encounters in the Koran, a decidedly ethnic volume. The essence of the Koran's surrogate for the Christian doctrine of God's sovereignty is that in it the difference between the potential inherent in man and that inherent in an inanimate object is ignored.

IT WOULD SEEM that the very principle of *analogia fidei* would lead us to expect the same situation to obtain in the doctrine of Creation. It would seem that if the dimension of process is in evidence in all the rest of the *opera Dei,* then we may expect it to be present also in mediate creation. It would seem that if in all the rest of His dealings with His creature the Lord our God does not hesitate to exploit whatever potential He has made to reside there, then we may expect Him to do the same as He in mediate creation lays a creative hand upon an already existing creaturality. Let us take a look at the Genesis account to see whether what we should expect to find there is also actually present.

Nothing is said quite so plainly nor quite so insistently in the Genesis account as that *process* is of the very essence of the matter. Sequence is held up to us everywhere. First of all, we read of a *series* of creative acts. God, who could also have called into being, in the twinkling of an eye, a whole world full of creatures, with trees loaded with ripe fruit for the taking and birds fluttering in their branches — chose not so to exercise His creative power. He who surely did not have to create in instalments nevertheless did just that, taking a whole "week" in which to arrive finally at the final objective. He who runs may read that the purpose of this Report is not to deny the processional but rather to enunciate it, once and for all.[3]

Now process normally implies progress. God's self-disclosure for instance was processional but it was also progressive. It moved from the simple to the complex. There is in all of God's redemptive work such a thing as the "fulness of time"; "first the blade and then the ear and then the full kernels in the ear" is the law of God's program elsewhere. We may therefore ask whether the account of God's creative activity as given in Genesis also has the element of progress in it, whether here too it is a matter of a scale with ever-increasing complexity.

Again nothing is more apparent than this in this account of origins. Mountains and rivers, low forms of animal life, higher forms, vertebrates, finally man "in His image." At this point it is perhaps not amiss to repeat what has oft been said already that when the Bible at this point reports on the progressive character of God's creative enterprise it is not so much interested in

3. Dr. Abraham Kuyper already sensed it in his day that creation has a processional dimension. He wrote that "The creation saga of the Scriptures precludes rather than encourages the idea of a dramatic appearance of new beings. We read that 'the earth brought forth cattle and creeping things,' not that they were deposited on the earth by God the way one puts pawns on a chessboard." This is a tidy repudiation of deistic creationism.

relating *how and where* the forward step was achieved as to reveal to us *that* it was achieved. The Good Book does not preclude and render unnecessary the labors of the taxonomer; it does not do his work for him but rather assigns his task to him, tells him that schematization is inherently possible.

As has been said already, man occurs at the end of the progressive scale. It has sometimes been said, a bit naively, that man was made *last*, on the sixth day, because God wanted all the rest to be on hand ready to receive man and to serve him before God introduced him. The house had to be all ready and garnished, so to speak, before the bride was carried over the threshold. This is hardly a good explanation for man's last-ness. First of all, he could have been quite happy upon the earth a whole lot earlier. He could have lived on this planet quite successfully before the animals put in their appearance. He can thrive on a vegetable diet. In fact, Genesis 9:3 seems to say that man began his career as a vegetarian. No, the point more probably is that Adam was created last because he represents the "latest" taxonomically; he was last because the Creator was moving forward from the simple to the complex and man as God's most complex creature stands at the *end* of a series.

THE QUESTION that finally confronts us is whether the Genesis account, which, as we have seen, incorporates the idea of process and of progress, does also contain the idea of exploitation of inherent potential. God subsequent to the *ex nihilo* episode of Genesis 1:1 (when He worked with empty hands) carried on with full hands, or with handfuls, in all the rest of the venture. Now he who takes created stuff in his hands has taken potential between his fingers; what he does with that handful of stuff will not be done without due recognition of this potential. The question is whether the Genesis account pictures the Lord our God as reckoning with inherent potential as He creates.

The answer again is yes. At each step Jehovah God exploits inhering potential. This is the point made in "Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind" (1:11). This is no snap-of-the-finger procedure, no aloof "Let there be. . ." such as the irruptionist would like to think, not herbs and trees placed upon the earth from whence I know not — but vegetation coaxed out of the earth by the power of Him who had made great potentials to reside there.

There is nothing in the divine record that coul remind one of the magician as he pulls rabbits ou of a hat, rabbits that were previously not ther and which come out of thin air! No, indeed; "ou of the ground Jehovah formed every beast of th field and every bird of the heaven" (2:19).

Recourse to potential is written large in thi inspired account of the *how* of creation. "Let th earth bring forth living creatures after their kinc cattle and creeping things" (1:24). Again, n fiat executed in disregard for inherent potentia but an unhesitating exploitation of this potentia each time the creative act precipitates a ne order.

Recourse to potential available to Him is relate in the report: "And God caused a deep sleep t fall upon Adam and He took one of his ribs . . . (2:21). No doubt God could have made an Ev *ex nihilo,* but the record wants us to know tha instead the Lord our God took recourse to po tential. Eve was not made out of nothing, sh was made of the most likely raw material avai able, namely, human tissue, still warm and aliv The mother of all the living was not the resu of sheer irruption.

Recourse to inherent potential is part of th Genesis report concerning the origin of man "And Jehovah God formed man out of the dust o the earth and breathed in his nostrils the breat of life" (2:7). God took to hand certain ra materials when He set about to make man; an man as a finished product we should not attemp to factor without due attention to whatever po tentialities were inherent in this raw material.

If Jehovah God made progressive use of Hi creative power and if in the use of it He con stantly took recourse to inherent potential, th question may well be asked whether we do no have to do with a constantly enlarging potentia It is not irreverent to suppose that every new ex penditure of creative energy stood, as it were upon the shoulders of its predecessor. God eac time took raw materials; raw, that is, with refer ence to the contemplated end-result; but may H not have used as raw material for a later form that which constituted the finished product of a earlier creative episode? Specifically, did God us advanced forms of plant life as raw material whe He created low-form animal life? And did H use low-form animal life when He created ad vanced-form animal life? Pointedly, was it "prim tive" dust out of which God created man? O was the "dust" already functioning in the mys terious teamwork of forces that we encounte wherever living tissue is?[4]

4. Dr. J. Lever of the faculty of the Free University o Amsterdam thinks it "likely that as God created the initia forms of life He made use of already present chemica combinations and their characteristic qualities."

The question of continuity between man and the lower animals presents itself at this point. What was the raw material in this case upon which the Almighty expended creative energy?[5] Evolutionism would of course insist that that raw material was a creature belonging to the order of the primates. The evidence put forward thus far in supporting this view of the evolutionists is not convincing. The evidence so far, it seems to the present writer, who hastens to say that he is but a layman in the field of historical anthropology, the evidence so far leaves ample room for the believer's conviction that no matter how much the dimension of process is in evidence in the creation of man, the dimension of the irruption is there also. The fossil record has as much to say about discontinuities as about continuities. Because the believer does not depersonalize nature, as does the man who allows only for the processional dimension, therefore he believes that he sees in all creation the footsteps of the Almighty, in the processional as well as in the irruptional.

Because the two are so constantly intertwined, therefore the man who is at heart non-believing can always deny the irruptive. There is always enough of the process in evidence to permit him to deny the irruptive. For this reason he can, and does, deny the whole chain of redemptive acts of God as they center in Jesus Christ. If in that whole chain one single item could be isolated, if it could for example be demonstrated that Jesus Christ was virgin-born, or that He rose from the dead, then faith would immediately make way for something else and our whole evangelical assignment would be altered. The man whose wise sayings have been preserved for us in the Book of Ecclesiastes sums it all up by saying: "He hath made everything beautiful in his time, He hath also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end. . . . Even as thou knowest not what is the way of the wind, nor the how of the bones in the womb of her that is with child, even so thou knowest not the work of God who doeth all."

Creation will remain a matter of faith, possible to him who in Jesus Christ has come to know the Creator; unbelief will remain possible for him who has not.

5. Dr. Lever, mentioned earlier, considers it "very extreme" to put forth the hypothesis that God took recourse to an anthropoid ape as he made man. We would agree that this is to go the limit with the suggestion that it was not "primitive" but already integrated material which God took to hand as He created man. We are grateful for Dr. Lever's insistence that "God formed the first man. *How* He did it is a mystery of which we know only that in the transaction something essentially new stood forth, something that prior to that moment had not existed." His language leaves room for both the irruptive and the processional dimension.

What About Denominationalism?

by James Daane

THE MATTER OF DENOMINATIONALISM is getting new attention in the Christian Reformed Church.

There are three reasons for this. *First,* the Christian Reformed Church hopes to celebrate the Centennial of her separate denominational existence in 1957. This can be done with an easy conscience only within the conviction that this separate existence is justified. *Second,* there is in the ecumenical movement an insistence that denominationalism is a sinful form of church existence, and that churches must do all in their power to live above the divisions of denominationalism. *Third,* there are some within the Christian Reformed Church who maintain that the Church, to be true to her own nature as the Church of Christ, must accept into her membership any true convert who is brought to Christ by the Church's ministry. Others think that the "truth" of denominationalism gives to a church warrant to set up peculiarly denominational standards of church membership for such converts.

The new concern about this matter is reflected in a symposium conducted in *The Banner* of September 21, 1956, entitled: "What About Denominationalism?" Three men take part in this symposium: the Rev. Edward Heerema, the Rev. Nicholas J. Monsma, and the Rev. Henry J. Triezenberg.

Usually a "symposium" is thought of as a discussion in which various opinions on a given subject come to expression — and Webster so defines it. This "symposium" in *The Banner* is not of *that* kind. *The Banner* "symposium" gives space to only one opinion — that denominationalism is right and good. The three contributors support this one opinion in three different ways. Rev. Heerema speaks of the Biblical warrant for denominationalism. Rev. Monsma endeavors to show with a bit of history that the separate denominational existence

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of the Christian Reformed Church is justified. Rev. Triezenberg concludes that denominationalism is a good thing on the basis of certain practical considerations. This symposium, therefore, is not a round table affair with an exchange of opinions. It is a "linear table" affair, with all members of the symposium lined up to the same position. This symposium is not a discussion. It is propaganda.

The major thesis of this symposium is that denominationalism is a good thing, even though it is conceded that it "can be overdone," and be "made too much of." It will be interesting and instructive to see whether the considerations adduced by each of the contributors really support the commonly held thesis that denominationalism is a good thing.

Rev. Heerema undertakes to search out the Biblical warrant for denominationalism. He finds "three main considerations . . . constituting the Biblical warrant."

The first is "the duty to be faithful to the truth of God's Word." Rev. Heerema cites several Scripture passages to show that the Bible does indeed teach that it is our duty to be faithful to the truth of God's Word. This would hardly have been necessary. No one doubts that the Bible teaches the duty of faithfulness to God's truth. What does need to be made plain, however, is how this "duty to be faithful to the truth of God's Word" warrants the division of the Church of Jesus Christ into separate denominations which refuse to take Holy Communion together. But Rev. Heerema makes no attempt to make that plain. He says only: We must be true to God's Word, therefore we may be separated. It would seem, however, more right to say: We must be true to God's Word, therefore Christians must be united.

The second consideration is "the duty to honor and to seek the unity of the body of Christ." Rev. Heerema quotes Paul's exhortation to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It is said that the believer should "despise the wanton growth of sects. He should weep at schism in the body of believers." Quite so. But it will be very hard to see how this obvious Christian demand for unity is warrant for denominationalism. It seems rather to be a judgment against it.

The third consideration advanced by Rev. Heerema is "that of human frailty," that is, "man's creaturely finiteness and his sinfulness." This bears on the problem in three ways: (1) "There will be differences of understanding among men." (2) "Human frailty" means "limits of human allegiance" — denominational allegiance, too. (3) "Human frailty will . . . prompt a genuine humility in the heart of the believer . . . make for . . . reluctance to press individual judgment unduly. But here, certainly, is a Biblical consideratio grossly misapplied. To be sure the Bible teach that we are sinful and frail. But sin and huma frailty, though they may *explain* denominationa ism, do not therefore give *Biblical warrant* for any more than the sin and human frailty whic may explain adultery give Biblical warrant for Rev. Heerema himself seems to recognize as muc for he says: "Such instances of human frailty a not normative for us." But if so, why make huma sin into a Biblical warrant for denominationalism

All three of these alleged "Biblical warrants" fo denominationalism are spectacularly wide of th mark. One can only wonder, in view of their tran parent weakness, how they could be seriously pr posed. The answer lies in the manner in whic the Bible is used.

It is good that Rev. Heerema appeals to the Bibl He is right in observing that even though d nominationalism arose after the Bible was writte the Bible is nevertheless our basic norm for evalua ing denominationalism. This should be kept i mind as we evaluate our own denominational exis ence, too. It has often been said that the secessio of the Christian Reformed Church in 1857 is "hi torically justified." It should be noted, howeve that unless it can be *Biblically* justified, it is sinful separation standing in need of justificatio by God's grace. Denominationalism (and eac separate denominational existence) must be eval ated in terms of the Bible.

Though Rev. Heerema does use the Bible in th endeavor to support the right of denominationalism it is not evident that he lets the Bible speak. appears rather that he tries to make the Bible speak If we are to let the Bible speak on the matter o denominationalism, we should approach the Bibl to obtain *the Biblical idea of the Church.* Now is plain that the Bible teaches that the Church i one, and that its unity is God-given, inasmuch a God has given it one faith, one hope, one Lord, on Spirit. In the light of this teaching denomina tionalism can appear only as a breaking of th unity, and therefore it can hardly be evaluated a a good thing.

But Rev. Heerema doesn't use the Biblical teach ing *about the Church* in order to evaluate denomina tionalism. He takes certain Biblical teaching *abou Christian duty,* and tries to turn these Christia duties into Biblical warrants for denominationa ism. This results not only in a forced interpreta tion of Christian duties, but even in a restatemen of them. Notice that Rev. Heerema takes Paul' admonition, "giving diligence *to keep* the unity, and makes of it an admonition diligently *to see* the unity of the Church, "as holiness is to b sought." Thus, instead of the duty of acceptin

nd keeping the God-given unity, our task becomes hat of seeking and creating the unity of human aithfulness. After awhile this use of the Bible urns full wheel. Not only are certain Christian uties made the warrant for denominationalism. tev. Heerema even reaches the point where he inds in the *failure of Christian duty* — in human in and frailty — a Biblical warrant for denominaionalism.

If the Bible had been used to obtain the Biblical dea of the Church, it would have been obvious hat the whole Church is one in Christ. And preisely because of that it would also have been obious that the one-whole Church stands under the Biblically enjoined duty to be faithful to the Word of God — that is, to *keep* the unity of the Church. n that case the duty "to keep the unity" could never have been put forward as a Biblical warrant for a livided Church existing in denominational disunity. But Rev. Heerema didn't begin with the Biblical dea of the one Church. He began with an indiidualized church — denominations — and appealed only to the duties of individual members as Biblical warrant for his individualized, denominational churches. But this is not to begin with the Biblical idea of the Church, in order to judge denominationalism in its light. This is to begin with the historical fact of denominations, and then select and interpret certain truths of the Bible in order to justify denominationalism.

THE SECOND CONTRIBUTOR, the Rev. Nicholas Monsma, sets himself to the task of justifying the Secession of 1857, which resulted in the separate existence of the Christian Reformed Church. He finds this necessary because of the "anti-denominational spirit of our day," which scorns denominationalism as a product of doctrinal differences which are "antiquated," "out of date," and "worn out." The Christian Reformed Church, says Monsma, is not immune to this spirit, and "some among us" yield to it and are apologetic about the Secession of 1857.

I, for my part, heartily doubt that any part of our leadership is possessed by the kind of anti-denominational spirit described by Rev. Monsma. Who among us says that infant baptism is "out of date," or that the doctrine of election is "worn out"? Who among us wants to promote greater church unity by saying that doctrinal differences are "antiquated and out of date"? Rev. Monsma quite overlooks the fact that men within our churches may be uneasy about denominationalism for quite different reasons.

It is indeed strange that denominationalism has become such a sacred and cherished thing that the most unworthy motives can without any ado be simply laid to the charge of those who question its legitimacy. If there be those today, as there have been in the past, who are uncertain about the legitimacy of the Secession of 1857, they will certainly not be persuaded by being told that theirs is the spirit that thinks doctrinal differences old fashioned and out of date.

After this, the argument takes an interesting turn. Rev. Monsma admits "that there are sad features about denominationalism." "Sin and its effects play a distressing role in the separate existence of Bible-believing churches." Because of sin, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists interpret Scripture differently. Well, then, if this diversity of doctrine and separate denominations are the results of sin, why not grant that one may indeed rightly question the legitimacy of denominationalism without in any degree sharing the "anti-denominational spirit of our day," which regards doctrinal differences as "antiquated and out of date"?

As for the Secession of 1857 — the beginning of the separate existence of the Christian Reformed Church — Rev. Monsma finds three reasons for justifying it.

First, it is urged that if the Christian Reformed withdrawal in 1857 was a hasty withdrawal, so was the union in 1850 a hasty union. But can a hasty withdrawal be justified by an appeal to a hasty union? The appeal to haste no more constitutes a justification than does the remark of Rev. Wyckoff of the Reformed Church to the effect that if the union should prove unsatisfactory, our Christian Reformed forbears were free to again withdraw. Separate denominational existence cannot be thus easily justified.

Second, it is urged that the immigrants who settled in Michigan differed among themselves on important matters of both doctrine and practice. This is supposed to prove that the fundamental question at issue was not that of Americanization, but of doctrine. How it so proves is not indicated, nor is it indicated why this justifies the Secession.

The third reason justifying the Secession and separate denominational existence is not a single, but a group of reasons. The Reformed Church is said to have been guilty of neglect of discipline, misuse of the sacraments, admittance of lodge members, neglect of family visiting, neglect of catechetical instruction, open communion, toleration of the neglect and denial of the doctrine of predestination, elimination of the negative part of the Canons of Dort. Meanwhile, there were language difficulties, and the difficulty of articulating their grievances because travel was difficult and money was scarce. Now all of these matters are serious — some more and some less. But the question that calls for an answer is whether any of them is sufficient cause for a secession. If any one of them is sufficient cause for secession, it ought to be given as the ground for the Secession. If no single reason

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is sufficient justification, it ought to be recognized that justification is not provided by giving a whole list of such reasons. Is it possible that many grounds for withdrawal are given because no single one seems enough? If so, it is no wonder that some Christian Reformed people wonder whether the Secession of 1857 was justified.

REV. Triezenberg is the third contributor to this symposium. He approaches the whole matter of denominationalism on a very practical, down-to-earth level. He looks at the existential situation — the division of the Church of Christ into many denominations — and asks: Is that good or bad?

His answer is that it is good. He does not seem to offer any reason for this except the existential one. He takes his norm from what is. He observes that there are differences in doctrine and practice, and different denominations. The Christian Reformed Church, among others, is "committed to the view that denominationalism is legitimate," since Article 61 of the Church Order says that we will admit no one to the Lord's Supper except those who "have made a confession of the *Reformed Religion.*" That is the situation, says Rev. Triezenberg. There are different doctrines and different denominations, including our own. Therefore — this is essentially the argument — denominationalism is good.

Rev. Triezenberg puts it even more strongly and attributes a *right* to denominationalism. That is evident from the definition he gives of denominationalism. He says: "Denominationalism means that we claim the right and the duty to ask agreement with certain specific doctrines and practices, just because it is our firm conviction that they are clearly taught in the Bible and *are therefore involved in our confession of faith in God and in Christ.* Denominationalism means at the same time that we recognize the right of other Christian groups to differ with us on infant baptism or on divine election without forfeiting thereby the right to call themselves a church of Christ."

But here again, it should be observed, Rev. Triezenberg does not get this "right" from the Biblical idea of the Church, or from the Biblical teaching concerning the conditions for church membership. It is simply a right that we claim for ourselves, and also a right that we concede to other Christian groups. We claim for ourselves the right to circumscribe the Church in terms of "certain specific doctrines and practices," and to delimit membership to those who agree with these, because these represent "*our* firm conviction," and are "involved in *our* confession of faith." Which is to say: We claim the right to the separate existence of *our* church. Rev. Triezenberg then proceeds to extend this same right to all other denominations. "W recognize the right of other Christian groups differ with us on infant baptism or on divine ele tion," with the understanding, of course, that th set up *their* own denomination and set up *the* beliefs as a condition for church membership.

It is true, of course, that any denomination h the *legal* right to its own doctrines and practice and has the *legal* right to make these a conditi for church membership. No denomination has t right to use police power, or any kind of physic force, to compel acceptance of its own denomin tional position. But this is not what Rev. Trieze berg means. Since he is trying to make a cas on the Christian basis, for the propriety and val of denominations, he is speaking of a *principial,* o shall we say, *Biblical* right.

But what he says can hardly be maintained o the basis of Scripture. Does any denominati have the right to deny infant baptism and sove eign election? Does any denomination have t right to make unsound doctrine the condition church membership? Rev. Triezenberg virtual answers in the affirmative, when he bases denom nationalism on *our* right to what *we* believe, an *their* right to what *they* believe. Thus, in defen ing the right to separate existence for his ow denomination, Rev. Triezenberg grants to ever other denomination the right to be wrong on ma ters of both doctrine and practice, and the rig to set up their own conditions of membership i order to perpetuate their errors of doctrine an practice. This kind of appeal for denominationa ism really gives license to individualism and relati ism run wild. This is, indeed, what some peop make out of Protestantism. But this is not th character of Reformation Protestantism, as w shall see presently.

If to justify our own separate existence we mus claim a right for ourselves which implicitly gran other denominations the right to be wrong, the there is something radically wrong with that righ on which we justify our own separate existenc Or again, if our separate existence in particula and denominationalism in general, is grounded i the notion that each denomination must grant, no merely the legal, but also the Biblical right to ever other denomination to be wrong in matters of doc trine and practice, then denominationalism in ge eral and our separate existence in particular i grounded on error. It is only if we do *not* gra other denominations the Biblical right to exist, tha we possess a Biblical right for our own existenc Extend Rev. Triezenberg's right to every denomina tion, and we lose our own right to exist. If t justify our own denominational existence, we mus justify every other denomination's right to exis and to perpetuate its wrong doctrines and practic then we lose our own right to existence by fallin

nto the crassest kind of indifference to doctrine nd practice. I know Rev. Triezenberg is not himelf thus indifferent, but such indifference is implicit in his conception of the right of denominationalism.

If we are concerned to live by the Word of God, nd not by our wishes or by the standard of human xperience, we will not be talking merely about our "right" to separate existence. We ought, if we rightly exist, to talk about our *inescapable duty* o exist in terms of the doctrines and practices we hold. Our mood here must be that of Luther: We an do no otherwise, so help us God! But then we will not grant, any more than Luther did, "the right of other Christian groups to differ with us on infant baptism or divine election." If we feel that we must break an existential unity, it will be because we are under the painful compulsion before God of being able to do no other. And our relation to other churches will not be in the spirit of "live and let live," but in the spirit of Protest against their failure to bow to the Word of God.

It is often said that Protestants have largely lost their Protest against the Roman Catholic Church. This is true. But it is also true that Protestant churches have long ceased to protest against other Protestant denominations whose error is as serious or more serious than that of the Roman Catholic Church. This loss of Protest is one factor accounting for the success of the ecumenical movement.

But it is precisely this right to protest against other erring denominations which Rev. Triezenberg surrenders by granting every denomination the right to differ from the doctrines and practices of his own denomination. If other denominations have the right to be wrong, then we lose the right to say they are wrong (and therewith we lose the right to say we are right). With that we lose the right to be genuine Protestants (Reformation brand) with the right and duty of Protest against erring denominations. This is a profound fault in Rev. Triezenberg's definition of denominationalism. There is in it no element of Protest, but only an easy granting of full rights to every denomination.

In our approach to the question of denominationalism, it would be much better if we did not start from the standpoint of our own denominational existence and try to justify that. It would also be better if we did not merely look at the existential fact of many differences and conclude that because there are differences denominationalism is good. We ought to judge denominationalism in the light of the Bible. Which is to say that we ought to judge denominationalism not from the point of view of the existence of many churches, but from the point of view of the divinely established One Church of Jesus Christ. If we were to do that, we would have a clear standard by which to make judgments concerning our own denomination and also concerning others.

This is precisely what each of the contributors to *The Banner* symposium lacks. These contributors begin with the assumption that denominationalism is good. Therefore they all lose a solid basis on which to justify their own denomination, and they also lack a clear-cut standard for evaluating others. The result is that they weakly admit that "denominationalism can be and is often overdone," "there are sad features about denominationalism," and that every denomination is justified. But they fail to provide a standard by which to judge which denomination is not justifiable, nor do they indicate *at what point* denominationalism becomes something that is "overdone."

This will leave thoughtful members of the Christian Reformed Church with the question whether their own denomination is "denominationalism overdone," and whether our separate existence is really justified. But they will have no principle or standard by which to answer the question. And if the right of our separate denominational existence should be questioned by others, they would be without basis on which to answer. The most they could say is: "We differ from others in doctrine and practice. Though this can be overdone, our leaders have assured us that in our case it has not been overdone."

It is regrettable that Rev. Triezenberg did not begin his article where he ended it. For in his last statement he is on much better ground, and he is committed to essentially the right position when he says: "We shall best promote the true welfare of the Church of Christ, including its *Scriptural unity,* by maintaining our Reformed witness and inviting others to join us in faithfulness to the full-orbed truth of God." Only, this "invitation" should be made an "assertion of duty." If our separate denominational existence can be justified, then this is the position we must take toward other churches. We must then urge upon them to become Christian Reformed so that we shall together live under the same denominational roof and together partake of Holy Communion at the table of the Lord. We will never give this "invitation" or assert this "duty," however, if we hold that denominationalism is a good thing, and that each denomination has the right to be what it is and the right to perpetuate itself by setting up its peculiar conditions for membership.

It would not be right to leave this subject without reflecting for a moment on Rev. Triezenberg's contention that "denominationalism promotes true unity." This is quite of a piece with his former reasoning, and helps to show how very

Denominationalism? — Continued

specious and perilous his whole position is. Rev. Triezenberg's argument here is essentially that those who differ from each other should separate from each other and get together with others who think as they do. Thus, in their own little circles, they have unity. And thus "denominationalism promotes true unity."

Rev. Triezenberg is surely far wide of the mark when he says that denominationalism promotes "true" unity. It may be granted that it promotes a certain kind of "unity" — the kind of "unity" that existed in the party of Cephas, in the party of Apollos, and in the party of Paul, at Corinth. But this was no "true" unity. It was division — sinful division — and Paul so characterized it.

A group of Christian people who deny, for example, infant baptism may unite and organize a church on the basis of this common denial. But the unity they promote is a unity in terms of this denial of infant baptism. Would this be true unity? Is this the kind of unity which promotes the Church of Christ? To be sure, they will be of like mind. There will be no disagreements. But would not this peace and agreement be a unity born of error? How then could we possibly take the position that denominations organized and unified on the basis of doctrines and practices which we believe to be erroneous, are thereby promoting the "true" unity of the Church? It is obvious that this kind of unity is simply another expression of the notion that a church has a right to be wrong, and the right to be left untroubled in the retention and promotion of its erroneous doctrine and practice.

Rev. Triezenberg's position gives the license of separation to those who disagree with others, and glorifies it as something which promotes "true unity." If taken seriously, this position would lead to bedlam. "If you can't agree, separate," is a principle which invites the formation of conventicles within the church, encourages the mushrooming of sects, and promotes secessions. But we've alre had too much of this.

This principle of "separation for the promot of unity" is certainly not based on any Bibli teaching. It has no relationship to the Pauline junction to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bo of peace." This principle of separation is ba on considerations of comfort, convenience, and ever-present interest in "the peace of the churc It is therefore essentially a position based on we ness and surrender. It is hard, indeed, to "k the unity." It is hard to set one's self and on children to the long and profound historical strug that helps us all to "attain unto the unity of faith." It is easier for churches to separate in or to find a more congenial life in a limited and prov cial fellowship. It is easier for the sake of " ligious prosperity or enjoyment, to bid . . . a f ternal adieu, and be by themselves again."

But this separation into like-minded little coter is certainly not a promotion of the kind of un that Christ wanted for his Church, nor of the k that Paul exhorted to. Here again, unfortunate Rev. Triezenberg tries to justify denominationali — and even to glorify it as a promoter of "t unity" — by an appeal to the spirit of individuali and relativism that says: Let us each live by o selves in peace, away from "constant bickerings a difficulties," and in a situation not disturbed "disagreement and unseemly quarreling."

THE symposium in *The Banner* has, inde performed a tremendous service. It has made v clear how much we have based our separate exi ence on our own very human experience, hum thinking, and human wishes. To say nothing the manner, it has shown how little we have us the Bible to justify our separate existence, a how much we have instead used history to obt a mere historical justification. And it has ma powerfully clear that the one thing we need in c thinking about denominationalism is a serious a honest search into the Word of God.

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The Fall of Three Houses

by Charlotte F. Otten*

IN THE BEGINNING there lived that first bride and ridegroom who established that loveliest of all omes in Paradise. Not long after, the Serpent rept into that small home as an uninvited guest nd ruined it. Then God closed it forever.

Since that time, many houses have fallen. Amer-an literature is rich with the stories of the falls f houses. I am particularly struck by Edgar Allan oe's *The Fall of the House of Usher,* Nathaniel lawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables,* and, ost recently, William Faulkner's *The Sound and he Fury,* and I should like to compare this "fall-f-a-house" theme as it is found in these three tories.

The points at which the three falls may be com-ared are so numerous that I shall have to limit yself to trying to find the heart of, the essence f, each fall. The precise nature of each house and ts collapse is, of course, determined by the religious nd philosophical commitment of the author. If ve can find out what the author's basic beliefs are, ve should have but little trouble in placing his ouse and determining the cause of its decay and uin.

Let us begin with *The Fall of the House of Usher.* It is a wild, plaintive, haunting tale. It s about Roderick and Madeline Usher, the only wo surviving members of the Usher family. The mell of death is heavy in the house and is even on he breaths of Roderick and Madeline. The whole tmosphere, says Poe, "had no affinity with the air f heaven." Fear, dread, doom, and an "unceasing adiation of gloom" hang over the house.

There are two lines from De Béranger which pre-ede the tale and give us our first clue to the fall:

> His heart is a lute suspended;
> Whenever it is touched it sounds.

The heart is a lute — an interesting metaphor and penetrating one. Perhaps the striking similarity etween the heart and lute is the passivity of each. These lines from De Béranger immediately recall he poet Shelley's "Make me thy lyre." Shelley tates a Romantic notion that the heart is a passive, ensitive instrument played upon by the Ideal World. Poe, too, is stating here that the heart is a assive, sensitive instrument but played upon by nvironment and sensation. The story itself illumi-nates this idea.

Poe starts the story with a gigantic prose metaphor foretelling the fall of the house. Poe's setting is an autumn day. It is not a Christian autumn day over which the Holy Ghost broods. It is not a Hawthorne autumn day dark with judgment. It is, rather, a Poe autumn day — dull, dark, dreary, oppressive, melancholy, brooded over by evil spirits and dark forces. Two pages into the story Poe gives us a history of the Usher House. It is an elusive, mysterious sketch, not at all like Hawthorne's concrete sketch of the Pyncheons and Faulkner's down-to-earth sketch of the Compsons. Although the Usher history is vague, one thing is sure — Roderick and Madeline come from neurotic stock (peculiar sensibility of temperament, no enduring strength). We are not certain of the precise nature of their inherited illness (excessive nervous agitation, morbid acuteness of the senses, morbid condition of the auditory nerve, a mere nervous affection), but we do know that here is no description of a moral lapse. It looks more like sensibility gone mad. When a human being is only a sensitive being, he needs to fear losing his senses. The Ushers live in too small a world. These Usher hearts — these lutes — vibrate to Ushers only; they hear only each other's tones. They cultivate sensibility at the expense of reason or morals. Roderick fears a terrifying death by madness, and this, it seems to me, fits in perfectly with what Poe says in the *Eleonora*:

> The question is not yet settled whether madness is or is not the loftiest intelligence — whether much that is glorious, whether all that is profound — does not spring from disease of thought — from moods of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect.

From Poe's description of his people, their illness, their house, the very air that they breathe, we get a hint of his philosophical commitment. The Ushers are seen only psychologically because they are what Poe considers all men to be — psychological, sensitive, passionate, intuitive, reacting beings. They live in a naturalistic universe, not a moral one. Their basic problem is not a moral one, not an intellectual one, not a spiritual one, but a psychological one. This is not a story of the soul in disruptive throes but of the senses; this, therefore, is a tale of terror and fear and madness.

Judging from all this, we begin to see a relationship between Poe and Hobbes. It was Hobbes who had the idea that man is an integral part of the natural order and that man does not transcend it. Poe expresses this thesis concretely through Roderick who believes in the sentience of the inor-

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Fall of the Three Houses — Continued

ganic. Here is Hobbes's definition of thought: "The original of them all is what we call sense." Hobbes found in sensation the fundamental element of mental life, and he stated this in metaphysical terms. Poe apparently accepts this principle and applies it aesthetically in *The Fall of the House of Usher.* There is still another of Hobbes's theses which seems to fit Poe and the Ushers: "Imagination is nothing but decaying sense." Roderick's intense imagination, thoroughly decadent, gets him into trouble. Evil is not something immoral but so horrible a sensation that Roderick runs from it in terror.

To substantiate my claim that this story reveals a close relationship between Poe and Hobbes, let me quote from a letter written by Poe to Lowell dated July 2, 1844:

> I have no belief in spirituality. I think the word a *mere* word. No one has really a conception of spirit. We cannot imagine what is not. We deceive ourselves by the idea of infinitely rarefied matter. Matter escapes the senses by degrees — a stone — a metal — a liquid — the atmosphere — a gas — the luminiferous ether. Beyond this there are other modifications more rare. But to all we attach the notion of a constitution of particles — atomic composition. For this reason only we think spirit different; for spirit, we say, is unparticled, and *therefore* is not matter. But it is clear that if we proceed sufficiently far in our ideas of rarefaction, we shall arrive at a point where the particles coalesce; for, although the particles be infinite, the infinity of littleness in the spaces between them is an absurdity. — The unparticled matter, permeating and impelling all things, is God. . . . Man. and other thinking beings, are individualizations of the unparticled matter.

Moving from Poe to Hawthorne, we jump into a completely different universe. *The House of the Seven Gables,* although not Hawthorne's best story, does reveal his fundamental outlook and approach to life. In this story Hawthorne immediately takes us with him into a moral universe.

Like Poe, Hawthorne sketches a history of the family, but he does not hesitate to point out the family "sickness unto death." He puts his finger on the Pyncheon pet sin and explains the curse in terms of it. Old Colonel Pyncheon builds a house with pride, and, incidentally, greed and murder, too, and he puts pride into the structure right along with the nails. Pride is the sin of the Pyncheons. Now pride is a spiritual sin — *the* spiritual sin, in fact. It was the sin committed by Adam and Eve in Paradise; it was the sin of Agamemnon. Pride is the sin that makes an essentially dependent creature declare his independence from God and his fellowman; consequently, pride is the sin that isolates. (Isolation for Hawthorne is a terrible mistake, for through it man breaks the bond of humanity.) Even Hepzibah and Clifford, though more sinned against than sinning, aristocratically, proudly, isolate the selves from their fellowman.

Hawthorne not only tells the reader about favorite Pyncheon sin, he also explains how t sin leads to their immediate and ultimate downf Originally, Colonel Pyncheon murdered Matth Maule in order to get the site for the House of Se Gables, and, as old Matthew died, he cursed Colonel with, "God will give him blood to drin Although a certain amount of mystery surrou the curse, we discover not too far into the st that the Colonel dies of apoplexy. The Colon descendants inherit his property, his pride, and apoplexy. The fact that the curse is handed do is nothing new in the Christian tradition, ". visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the cl dren unto the third and fourth generation of th that hate me . . ." nor, for that matter, in the Gr tradition — the house of Atreus.

Perhaps at this point it would be fruitful to l at the main characters in the story, for throu them we can understand better the nature of th fall. First to Jaffrey Pyncheon. Although he ba ly comes to life — he is much like a portrait — is a perfect picture of the hypocrite. Again, procrisy can exist only in a Christian world. pretends to be generous; he is actually avaricio He looks like the innocent flower but is the serp under't. Sin being its own punishment, Jaff through greed gets blood to drink instead of mon to spend. Blood will have blood.

Hepzibah, the kindly, aristocratic, scowling maid, has pride in her ancestry; but it is a pr so mild and harmless (except insofar as it isola her) that she becomes merely pathetic and ne tragic. She voluntarily leaves the House of Sev Gables and thereby achieves victory over it and sins.

Clifford is a sensitive, artistic person. His ch virtue is his sensibility and that he nearly loses prison. On him, too, is the stamp of isolation, b he, too, removes this by forsaking the House Seven Gables.

Phoebe and Holgrave, interestingly enough, re resent the Pyncheons and the Maules. Holgra a progressive, intelligent young man, is a typi Hawthorne figure: he has to watch out for the s of the intellect. He grandly resists one moment great temptation:

> To a disposition like Holgrave's, at once speculative a active, there is no temptation so great as the opportun of acquiring empire over the human spirit; nor any i more seductive to a young man than to become the arbi of a young girl's destiny. Let us, therefore, — whate his defects of nature and education, and in spite of scorn for creeds and institutions, — concede to daguerreotypist the rare and hign quality of reveren for another's individuality. Let us allow him integri also, forever after to be confided in; since he forba himself to twine that one link more which might ha rendered his spell over Phoebe indissoluble.

hoebe is all heart. Hawthorne removes all the npediments and performs the perfect Hawthorne arriage — the marriage of mind and heart.

Another important character in the book is the ouse itself. It, like the House of Usher, is identied with the occupants. Yet, unlike the House of sher, the human beings in it can rise above it: ey deliberately reject it, abandon it, exercise oice over against it.

The story is a simple one but a dramatic one. It perates in a friendly, familiar universe and its roblems are the traditional Christian ones. The ouse falls through sin — but there is grace for ose who will have it.

Faulkner picks up the "fall-of-a-house" theme n *The Sound and the Fury*. This is a moving story f the fall of an old Southern family, the Compsons. n the appendix appearing at the beginning of the ook Faulkner gives the history of the Compson amily from 1699-1945. Here is a matter-of-fact escription of each character and his end — no uspense, no mystery. Faulkner states plainly, for xample, "committed suicide in Cambridge, Massahusetts, June, 1910 . . ."; or "doomed and knew t. . . ."

This is the story of an old Southern family, its radual disintegration and final annihilation. The tory tells specifically about the six remaining mem-ers — Mr. and Mrs. Compson, Benjamin, Candace, Quentin, and Jason. As for the house itself, that s, the structure, there is very little left. Mr. Compon, a pathetic figure, lives to see his property sold except for a sheer remaining fragment. Mrs. Compson, the fine Southern gentlewoman gone to seed, is selfish, simpering, silly. She is incapable of realizng that the times have changed, and often she ooks more ridiculous than pathetic.

Benjamin, "a heap of broken images," the last of the Compsons, is an idiot, and a castrated one at that. He epitomizes the final destruction of the family — sterility and idiocy. Yet he has a vital sense of the past which is for him an eternal present. His section of the tale, although the tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, is delicate, sensitive, and ingenious. The Compsons live in a spiritually barren land and they become to themselves a barren land.

Quentin III is a DP, aware of his dispossession but unable to cope with it. He, Faulkner suggests, is a kind of Hamlet figure — "the times are out of joint." He realizes that he lives in a mechanistic, amoral world; he has neither the strength nor the insight to set it right. He is in the "to-be-or-not-to-be" situation and decides that it is better to go to that country from whose bourn no traveller returns than to stay in a country whose god is money and whose people have no souls. Quentin makes a big mistake, however; he thinks that by destroying consciousness he will get conscience. Some critics think that to compare Quentin to Hamlet is to make Quentin look weak. Actually, I believe, the contrast is striking. Quentin is decidedly no Hamlet, but then these are not Hamlet-times either. In Faulkner's universe, a naturalistic one, it is impossible to get a tragic figure; only in Shakespeare's type of universe, one in which man can make conscious moral choices, is it possible to get tragedy. In Quentin I think I see Faulkner. Faulkner himself tries to escape twentieth century naturalism, but he takes the wrong route. He chooses philosophic idealism — an Emersonian, Romantic type at that. The trouble with this solution is this: it presupposes a basic materialism and then imposes divinity or spirit upon it; this divinity or spirit, however, is nothing more than a refined type of matter spread throughout the universe.

Quentin's struggle with the guilt problem is an interesting one. Faulkner meant it to be a moral problem; in Faulkner's world, however, it looks more like a neurotic one. Incest looks here more like obsession and abnormality than immorality. The trouble with Quentin is that he tries to find a Christian universe without accepting its presuppositions. He and Faulkner build on sand, and their structures fall.

Candace is a doomed figure, doomed by her sex, her family, her times. She, too, is a DP, but she accepts her fate, lives in an amoral universe, and becomes a degenerate.

Faulkner strips Jason of all the common Christian virtues. His one principle in life is never to be taken in. He is a thorough product of his times: no sense of roots, no awareness of his plight. He lives in a materialistic universe which he narrows down to an economic one. Jason is a hollowman, headpiece and heart filled with straw.

The Compson House falls quietly and dramatically but not greatly.

We have three houses doomed to fall. Poe's and Faulkner's houses fall in rather similar universes, Hawthorne's in a completely different one. Poe and Faulkner are in a naturalistic, mechanistic one, Hawthorne in a Christian one. The difference between Hawthorne on the one hand and Poe and Faulkner on the other highlights the whole modern crisis. Western man has assumed, until recently, the familiar trinity of God as Creator, man as creature, and nature as creation. These beliefs are among the inarticulate major premises of our western philosophy. They are, for the most part, implicit in western thinking and only rarely now are they made explicit. It is when these major premises are threatened that we have a crisis. Whether Poe recognizes this crisis, I doubt; Faulkner does, but he is unable to find the basic trouble and his patchwork is bad. In Poe's and Faulkner's

Fall of the Three Houses —

world there is only perception and not knowledge, and therefore there is never any rational justification for an act. Man in a naturalistic universe is either moved crudely by the senses, as Poe would have it, or is influenced by the "divinity" within him, as Faulkner romantically supposes. Hawthorne, however, accepts these major premises, operates within the framework of the Greco-Roman realistic metaphysics, and comes up with a universe rationally ordered.

Poe and Faulkner take a long hard look at man and this universe, shake their heads, and say:

> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

And Hawthorne replies:

> Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret s
> in the light of thy countenance. For all our days
> passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a t
> that is told. . . . So teach us to number our days, t
> we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Notes and Letters . . .

(*Continued from page 2*)

with Jesus, not with J. J. Lamberts. And that is a ridiculous anachronism, because we really ought to associate such language with King James, and not with Jesus at all. A letter written during the reign of James would have read in somewhat the same way, even though the subject matter was far more secular and casual than the above.

In language and in custom, we are inevitably the creatures of our surroundings — and God's Word gives us no warrant for maintaining that this is not a perfectly legitimate phenomenon. Yet all of us have been forced to master what is at least a quite different dialect of English from our own in order to worship God. That is neither scriptural, sensible, nor necessary.

I, for one, will continue to address God as "Thou," simply because my background and environment make it the only appropriate pronoun *for me*. But my children feel uncomfortable using that kind of language, and I am certainly not going to interfere with their praying by forbidding them to call their heavenly Father "you."

But I am much more concerned with the slavish archaism and orthodoxism of those who insist on using such expressions as "Our Father *which* art in heaven." In present-day English, *which* refers only to inanimate objects. Any thinking listener — and we do want our listeners to think, don't we? — can only assume that we believe God to be a thing rather than a person. The similar use of "which" and "it" in reference to the Holy Spirit is even more treacherous. I am quite aware that the Greek word for "spirit" is a neuter noun, but — let's face it — English has no grammatical gender in nouns, and such a forced reflection of an arbitrary category in language can only lead to misunderstanding.

In the matter of Bible translations, we are, of course, talking only about the linguistic form or "expression," not about the faithful reflection of the intent of the authors, which is "content." Not many people have yet had the courage to point out that, if the intention of the translators of the Revised Standard Version was to produce a translation in modern English, they did not go nearly far enough. For example, the translators unfortunately did not dare to tamper with those words so sanctified by the halo of familiarity but so frightfully misleading, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Those words are quoted aloud far more than they are read with the eyes. Little children memorize them before they learn to read. And hardly ever does the speaker betray by his intonation that he is uttering two independent clauses. To any ear unaccustomed to the niceties of Elizabethan English, the sentence has precisely the same structure as "That is the book I don't want." In present-day English, "want" is *only* a transitive verb meaning "desire," *never*

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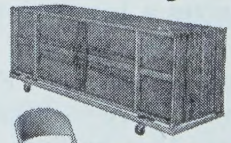

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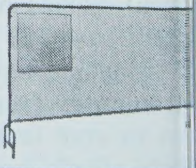

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an intransitive verb meaning "be in need." The last part of the quotation therefore requires an object, just as any normal relative construction does: "That is the book [that] I don't want," "The Lord is my shepherd [that] I don't want." I distinctly remember misunderstanding this precious Psalm for about two years of my childhood (and I couldn't be helped, because I didn't dare admit that I disagreed with it). My two children who are old enough to have been exposed to the Psalm have had precisely the same difficulty — one had the blessed courage to admit it, but the other had to be asked. Several other people have told me of the same experience. Things have indeed come to a pretty pass when the children of the covenant can find the 23rd Psalm intelligible only after a lesson in historical linguistics!

My own rather conservative suggestion in this case is, "The Lord is my shepherd; I will not be in need." The objection has been seriously raised that we should not translate the content of a verb by a noun. How silly can you get? Unfortunately for such objectors, we find it necessary in Dutch to say, "*Ik heb den Here lief*," where we say "I love the Lord" — has anyone suffered seriously in his spiritual life because of that?

It is not at all necessary to sacrifice dignity, reverence, or theological conciseness when we use current language that is intelligible to anyone. Nor does the use of such language oblige us to resort to slang words or phrases (such as two I have deliberately used), to expressions that are generally unacceptable, or to childish language. Modern English is entirely compatible with respectable, vigorous pulpit oratory and devotional literature. It will also be understood. Let's hear and see more of it.

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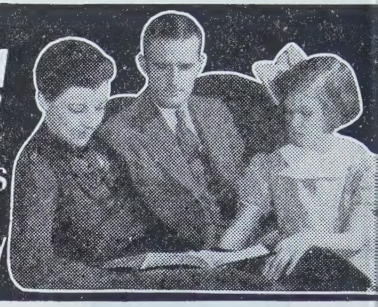

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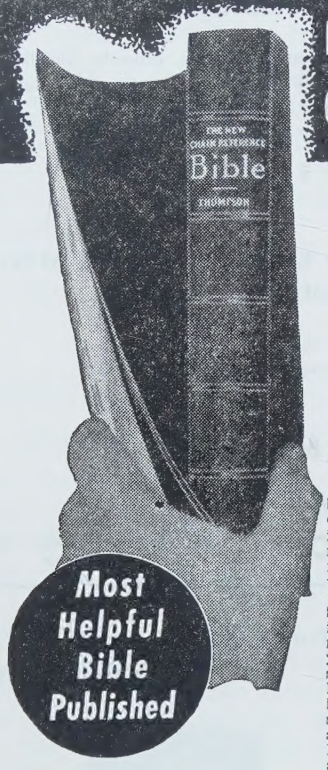

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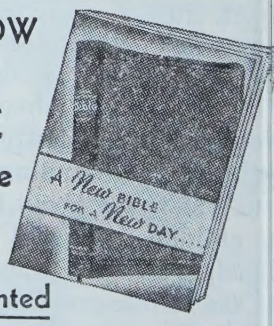

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